
Initiating a Culture of Acknowledgement in the Nursing Home: It's about Community!

PI/Project Director

Nursing Homes Involved

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Daughters of Sarah Nursing Center

Description of Intervention

The primary project goal was to create a sustainable, values based, staff and resident centered culture in the entire facility using an educational program as the vehicle for change. Employees participated together in classes, creating a linkage across various roles, job descriptions, and locations of work within the facility.

The initial curriculum consisted of 12, 30-minute education sessions offered repeatedly on all shifts over a period of six months. A second set was condensed to five sessions of 45 to 50 minutes each so that staff could more readily attend. Four conceptual elements drove the "culture of acknowledgement" initiative and its educational content: environment, practice, communication/teambuilding, and a shared understanding of what constitutes culture. Homework-like tasks included contracting with the trainer to practice a particular form of acknowledgement in the facility for one week.

Research Design

Research Method – A descriptive triangulated methodology with mixed methods was used to evaluate the culture change intervention. Research questions sought to assess the impact of the program on: 1) staff's engagement in self-directed work planning, perception of the facility as a desirable place to work, and ability to recognize/respond to the needs of residents, 2) perceived communication among various groups at the facility, 3) resident status, and 4) family satisfaction/participation with facility-based activities.

Sample – The project evaluation encompassed multiple groups across the organization, including certified nursing assistants, nurses, family members, and department leaders. Residents were not directly involved in the study.

Measures – A self-efficacy questionnaire created to measure confidence in performing resident-related care was administered to certified nursing assistants pre/post-intervention. Nursing administration provided audits of average absenteeism per quarter and annual turnover data. Staff focus groups, individual interviews, and direct observation were also used prospectively. Resident outcomes were evaluated using quarterly MDS data, counts of behavior referrals, and departmental reports. Grievances and participation in facility activities were tracked quarterly for family members, who completed two annual satisfaction surveys.

Analysis Approach – Descriptive thematic analysis was used for qualitative focus groups and interviews. Quantitative analyses included correlation matrices, factor analysis, and t-tests/ANOVAs to compare the means of pre/post-intervention data. MDS information was subjected to trend analysis over a timeframe of 18 months.

Results

Quantitative data indicated little or no variability over time in resident, staff, or family outcomes which for residents may suggest less decline than otherwise would have occurred. Decreases in certified nursing assistant turnover, behavioral referrals, and family grievances were found, but conclusions were not drawn because of small sample numbers and/or data collection problems. Qualitative data consistently suggested that the intervention had a positive impact on staff perceptions of the facility, as well as the ability to effectively engage residents, provide quality care, and create an interactive community. Family satisfaction was high at both intervals, with the common theme of a caring staff who treat residents with respect, compassion, and affection.

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